

ON A NEW BLIND SNAKE FROM LIFU, LOYALTY ISLANDS.

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With figures in the text.

IN his excellent "Catalogue des Reptiles de la Nouvelle Calédonie," published in the *Memoirs of the Linnean Society of Normandy*, vol. xv. 1869, A. Bavay mentions the common occurrence of a small Boid Snake, *Enygrus Bibronii* (now identified as *E. australis*, Montrouzier) on Lifu at the point called Gatcha; and he observes that it is the only terrestrial Snake found on that island, whilst none but marine forms (*Hydrophiinae*) are known to occur in New Caledonia. Although, through one of those absurd blunders which so frequently spoil the work of compilers, a poisonous land Snake has appeared on lists of New Caledonian Reptiles¹, only Hydrophiines have to the present day been seen in that archipelago. It is therefore very interesting now to find the fauna of Lifu enriched by the discovery of a second land Snake. This discovery we owe to Dr Willey, who brought home from that island a single specimen of a *Typhlops* belonging to an undescribed species which it gives me great pleasure to name

TYPHLOPS WILLEYL.

Diagnosis: Snout depressed, rounded, subacuminate, strongly projecting; nostril lateral, between two nasals, the anterior of which is in contact with the first and second labials; nostril one-third the width of the head, not extending to the level of the eyes; præocular present, much broader than the ocular, in contact with the second and third labials; eyes distinct; præfrontal, frontal, and interparietal not larger than the scales on the body, supraocular a little larger, parietal twice as large; four upper labials, third and fourth nearly equal and in contact with the ocular. Diameter of body 32 times in the total length; tail as long as broad, ending in a small spine. 22 scales round the body. Olive-brown above, yellowish beneath.

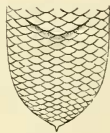
Total length 195 millimetres.

¹ See Trouessart, *Bull. Soc. Zool. France*, xxiii. 1898, p. 186.

The single specimen has been presented to the British Museum by Dr Willey.

By its technical characters, this species approaches nearest *Typhlops acuticauda*, Peters, from the Pelew Islands, and *T. aluensis*, Blgr., from the Solomon Islands, both of which differ, among other points, in the narrower præocular shield and the much more slender body.

Considering the general distribution of the *Typhlops*, the fact of a species inhabiting the Loyalty Islands is far less remarkable than the total absence of representatives in New Caledonia. In reality the herpetological fauna of the latter islands,



Profile, upper and lower views of head, and lower view of tail of *Typhlops Willeyi*.

by no means a poor one so far as Lizards are concerned, bears no kind of affinity to that of the Loyalties. The high degree of specialization attained by some Geckos of New Caledonia, viz. the curious species of the endemic genus *Rhacodactylus*, is even borne out by the osteological structure, as I have recently ascertained the parietals to be fused to a single bone in *R. trachyrhynchus*, thus presenting a remarkable exception to a character which has been used to define families, or even "suborders" among the Lacertilia. Another instance of the overrated importance attached to the fusion of paired bones is to be found in the genus *Varanus*, where I have found the nasal bones to be distinct in two adult specimens of *V. salvator*, one in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons (as noted by me in 1891), the other in the Collection of University College (as pointed out to me by Prof. Minchin), as well as in the skeletons I have examined of *V. prasinus* and *V. timorensis*.